

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 EB-07 /072 W

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R 282050Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9716

S E C R E T BUENOS AIRES 0657

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, OAS, AR, US

SUBJECT: VIGNES' ANNOUNCEMENT POSTPONEMENT OF MFM

REFS: A. BA-0973, B) BA-0359, AND C) BA-0580

1. SUMMARY. FOLLOWING IS EMBASSY PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF FACTORS THAT INDUCED FONMIN VIGNES TO ANNOUNCE POSTPONEMENT OF MFM. WHILE REACTION TO TRA WAS PROXIMATE CAUSE FOR POSTPONEMENT, AS INDICATED IN VIGNES' AND DEPARTMENT'S STATEMENTS, EMBASSY BELIEVES IT WAS THIS IN CONJUNCTION WITH CUBA ISSUE WHICH EVENTUALLY LED TO VIGNES' DECISION. END SUMMARY.

2. WITH DEATH OF PERON AND REMOVAL OF GELBARD FROM POST AS ECONOMY MINISTER, INTERNAL DYNAMIC WHICH HAD IMPELLED GOA TO TAKE LEAD IN EFFORT TO BRING CUBA BACK INTO INTER-AMERICAN FOLD WAS REMOVED. THE ASCENDANCY OF LOPEZ REGA AND THE INCLUSION OF NEW CABINET MINISTERS INDIFFERENT OR HOSTILE TOWARD CUBA LED TO FURTHER EROSION OF INTERNAL SUPPORT FOR PREVIOUS CUBA POLICY. DESPITE THIS, VIGNES AND GOA AS A WHOLE, HAVING SO PUBLICLY COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO CHAMPIONING CUBA CAUSE, COULD NOT DO ABRUPT ABOUT FACE ON ISSUE. INDEED, ALTHOUGH PULIT WAS SOMEWHAT LESS SANGUINE THAN ON JAN. 21 (SEE BA-0973) WITH RESPECT TO HOLDING MFM ON TIME, HE AND AMBASSADOR FIGUERERO ON JAN. 22 DISCUSSED

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WITH EMBOFFS TENTATIVE FORMULA FOR HANDLING CUBAN

QUESTION AT MFM WHICH WENT BEYOND DISCUSSIONS AT ESTANCIA (SEE BA-0359). THEY INDICATED GOA WAS CONSIDERING FORMULA WHEREBY CAUCUS OF LATIN AMERICAN FOREIGN MINISTERS JUST PRIOR TO OPENING OF MFM WOULD AGREE ON DECLARATION FAVORING LIFTING OF SANCTIONS AT APRIL GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF OAS. DECLARATIONS WOULD THEN HAVE BEEN PRESENTED TO SECRETARY KISSINGER. (ALTHOUGH, IN FACT, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN CLEARED BEFOREHAND WITH HIM.) PULIT AND FIGUERERO WERE TO HAVE FLESHED OUT PROPOSED SCENARIO IN CONVERSATION SCHEDULED THIS WEEK. OBVIOUSLY, HOWEVER, DEVELOPMENT OF FORMULA HAS NOW BEEN OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS.

3. IT IS CLEAR FROM ABOVE NOT ONLY THAT VIGNES WAS GOING AHEAD WITH PLANS FOR THE MFM, BUT ALSO THAT HE CONTINUED TO WALK FINE LINE ON CUBAN ISSUE TO VERY END. VIGNES' PREFERRED POSITION WAS THE ONE STATED TO THE SECRETARY IN WASHINGTON, I.E., THAT MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF TIME BE ALLOWED FOR SOLUTION TO CUBAN PROBLEM. FOR EVEN AT THAT TIME, HE SAW HIMSELF HAVING TO WALK TIGHT-ROPE BETWEEN GOA'S DECLARED INTERNATIONAL POSITION AND SHIFTING DOMESTIC OPINION. QUITO AFTERMATH AND ROA'S OUTBURST IN LIMA UNDERCUT THIS POLICY AND WITH TRADE ACT BROUHAHA FOUNDERED IT. WITH POSTPONEMENT, HE WILL AGAIN REGAIN FLEXIBILITY ON CUBAN QUESTION AND ALLOW GOA POSITION TO ADJUST TO EVENTS ELSEWHERE IN HEMISPHERE AND US.

4. THE HOSTILE AND UNMEASURED REACTION OF MANY LATIN AMERICANS TO TRADE ACT COMPLICATED THE ISSUE FURTHER. INITIAL RESPONSE HERE WAS TO HOPE THAT SPECIAL OAS SESSION AND RESPONSE OF EXECUTIVE BRANCH IN US WOULD COOL PASSIONS SO THAT MFM COULD HAVE GONE FORWARD IN MARCH. WHEN VIGNES SAW THAT LATIN AMERICAN POSITIONS WERE HARDENING ON TRA ISSUE AND UNFORTUNATE CONJUNCTION OF TRADE ACT AND CUBA MADE ANY POSSIBILITY OF LATIN AMERICAN UNITY IMPOSSIBLE AT THIS TIME, HE OPTED TO USE TRADE ACT AS ESCAPE HATCH FOR SITUATION THAT WAS RAPIDLY BECOMING UNTENABLE. IN HIS STATEMENT TO PRESS (BEING TRANSMITTED SEPTEL) AND IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS, VIGNES STRESSED DIVISIVENESS OF TRA AS REASON FOR POSTPONEMENT,

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CAREFULLY NOTING AS HE DID TO AMB. HILL JAN. 26 (SEE BA-0580) THAT THIS ISSUE HAD REPLACED CUBA AS NUMBER ONE ITEM ON LATIN AMERICAN AGENDA. HE ADDED THAT LATIN AMERICAN UNITY NOT POSSIBLE UNDER THESE CONDITIONS. THEREFORE, POSSIBILITIES FOR FRUITFUL DIALOGUE WITH US REDUCED AT THIS TIME. HIS CRITICISM OF TRADE ACT ITSELF IN STATEMENT YESTERDAY (JAN. 27) WAS MEASURED AND WE BELIEVE IT REFLECTS NECESSITY FOR HIM TO MAINTAIN

CREDIBILITY WITH MORE HOSTILE LATIN AMERICANS AND
TO PROTECT DOMESTIC FLANK.

5. INITIAL REACTION TO VIGNES' POSTPONEMENT LOCALLY
WAS FAVORABLE. LA OPINION, WHICH GIVES GREAT COVERAGE
TO FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS AND HAS BEEN OFTEN CRITICAL
OF FONMIN, COMMENTED THAT HE MADE BEST DECISION GIVEN
DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES. ARTICLE POINTS OUT THAT
VIGNES' HANDLING OF POSTPONEMENT MAKES POSSIBLE BOTH
REBUILDING OF LATIN AMERICAN UNITY AND KEEP OPEN
LINES FOR NEW DIALOGUE. ENGLISH LANGUAGE BUENOS AIRES
HERALD TAKES SIMILAR LINE. MOST LIKELY SOURCE OF
PERSONAL CRITICISM OF VIGNES WILL BE ANTI-PERONIST
PRESS ORGANS SUCH AS LA PRENSA, BUT CRITICISM FROM
THESE SOURCES WILL HAVE NO DAMAGING IMPACT ON HIS
POSITION.

6. DEPARTMENT'S STATEMENT YESTERSAY, JAN 27, TO EFFECT
THAT SECRETARY STILL DESIRES TO MAKE LATIN AMERICAN
TRIP RECEIVED WIDE COVERAGE AND STATEMENTS BOTH FROM
WASHINGTON AND EMBASSY SAYING US STILL SUPPORTS HOLDING
OF CONFERENCE IN BUENOS AIRES RECEIVED FAVORABLE TREATMENT
AND BOLSTERED FONMIN'S POSITION. FACT THAT DEPARTMENT
ANNOUNCED SECRETARY'S TRIP STILL ON SEEN HERE AS
INDICATION NEW DIALOGUE, THOUGH IT MAY HAVE SUFFERED
TEMPORARY SETBACK, STILL VIABLE POLICY BOTH FOR US
AND LATIN AMERICA.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETINGS, RELATIONS WITH REGIONAL ORGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BUENOS00657
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750032-0975
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750115/aaaaanhu.tel
Line Count: 143
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BA-0973, 75 BA-0359, 75 AND BA-0580
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 SEP 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <03 SEP 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VIGNES' ANNOUNCEMENT POSTPONEMENT OF MFM
TAGS: PFOR, PORO, AR, US, CU, XM, OAS, (VIGNES, ALBERTO JUAN VICENTE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006